DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 432 940 HE 032 248

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TITLE	Collaboration: Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Working Together To Promote Student Learning. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Washington, DC.; George Washington Univ., Washington, DC. Graduate School of Education and Human Development.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-HE-1999-5
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	RR-93-002008
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 630, Washington, DC 20036-1183.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Ancillary School Services; College Faculty; *Cooperative Programs; Enrichment Activities; Extracurricular Activities; Higher Education; Integrated Activities; *Integrated Curriculum; Program Development; *Student Personnel Services
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest urges greater collaboration between academic departments and student affairs personnel at institutions of higher education for the purpose of providing students with a seamless culture of learning. Reports of the American College Personnel Association, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and the American Association for Higher Education are cited as stressing the need for increased collaboration. Principles of the Student Learning Imperative for developing a more integrated curriculum are noted, such as generating enthusiasm for institutional renewal, creating a common vision of learning, fostering collaboration and cross-functional dialogue, and examining the influence of student cultures on student learning. Briefly addressed are six examples of collaborative efforts, including an introduction to college courses, first-year student groupings, new student orientation, outcomes assessment, service learning, and an annual period when student affairs and faculty plan activities. (Contains 17 references.) (DB)

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ERIC®-HE Digest Series EDO-HE-1999-5 1999
The George Washington University Department of Education

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COLLABORATION: Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Working Together to Promote Student Learning

Karen Kellogg

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the colonial colleges, the faculty was responsible for the intellectual, social, and spiritual development of students. As faculty found less time to focus on the social and personal development of their students, student affairs professionals emerged to fulfill that need. Increasingly throughout the history of American higher education, the gap between the roles of faculty and student affairs professionals has widened (Bloland et al, 1994, 1996). The incorrect perceptions and lack of knowledge about each other's jobs, the alienating and confusing jargon, the increased specialization and the financial competition between these two groups has led to misunderstandings between faculty and student affairs professionals (Knefelkamp, 1991; Kuh et al, 1994; Love & Love, 1995). The need for integration of these roles, and an attempt to change the culture of learning from separatist to seamless, has been a recent focus of higher education administrators.

THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION

In the 1980s, higher education researchers began focusing on the necessity for increased collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs. Although the traditional literature about student affairs assigns student affairs professionals the responsibility of students' social and emotional development and faculty responsibility for the intellectual development of students, it has become apparent in recent years that the academic side and student affairs side of campus must work together (Bloland et al, 1996; Kuh et al, 1994; Kuh, 1996).

The entire academic community must work together to place more of an emphasis on student learning and to create a seamless learning environment between in- and out-of-class experiences for students. In a seamless learning environment, students will have opportunities for learning both in the classroom and out-of-the classroom through co-curricular activities. Students will work with and get to know faculty and staff while taking courses and participating in non-classroom learning activities. All of these learning experiences will contribute to personal growth and development in students. In order for seamless learning to become a reality, increased collaboration and cooperation between faculty and staff must exist so that the communication and organization of learning activities is enhanced (ACPA, 1994; Bloland et al, 1996; Hyman, 1995; Kuh et al, 1994; Kuh, 1996).

> "According to the Student Learning Imperative (ACPA, 1994), ... students benefit from many and varied experiences during college and learning and personal development are cumulative, mutually shaping processes that occur over an extended period of time in many different settings. The more students are involved in a variety of activities inside and outside the classroom, the more they gain. Student affairs professionals attempt to make 'seamless' what are often perceived by students to be disjointed, unconnected experiences by bridging organizational boundaries and forging collaborative partnerships with faculty and others to enhance student learning."

Student affairs associations and researchers have written extensively about the need for collaboration. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (1997) has published as two of their seven Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs that administrators should "engage students in active learning" and "forge educational partnerships that advance student learning." Likewise, the American College Personnel Association (1999) has listed as two of their eight trends for the next century, "Learning and Teaching in the 21st Century" and "Collaboration and Partnerships." In a combined effort, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), ACPA and NASPA (1998) have published the report, "Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning." This report contains ten principles about learning and collaboration and provides examples of institutions that have found success through collaboration.

Higher education administrators hope that this increased collaboration will better fulfill the institution's mission, improve retention, and improve the total college experience for students (ACPA, 1994; Hyman, 1995; Kuh, 1996).

STUDENT LEARNING

Student affairs researchers and administrators have urged student affairs professionals to focus on enhancing student

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learning within the entire university community—a return to the original mission of higher education. The Student Learning Imperative (SLI) (ACPA, 1994) discusses several assumptions and characteristics that student affairs professionals should keep in mind as they create educational activities that foster student learning. Many of the tenets of the SLI focus on the necessity for faculty to collaborate with student affairs professionals to make student learning a campus-wide priority.

George Kuh (1996) used the tenets in the SLI to develop six principles to guide institutions to integrate the curriculum and extra-curriculum: generate enthusiasm for institutional renewal; create a common vision of learning; develop a common language; foster collaboration and cross-functional dialogue; examine the influence of student cultures on student learning; and focus on systematic change. The common element in each of the six principles is campus-wide collaboration. This collaboration is crucial to creating common goals with which to provide a seamless learning environment for students.

MAKING COLLABORATION A REALITY

Once an institutional decision has been made to foster collaboration between faculty and student affairs staff members, a joint goal setting and planning meeting can take place (Eickmann, 1989). As working relationships develop, staff and faculty can begin to bridge the gap and create purposeful activities for students (ACPA, 1994). Several institutions have been successful within their collaborative efforts. Some programs and activities that have resulted from collaboration include:

**University 101* – this introduction to college courses can be team-taught by faculty and staff (King, 1993).

**First Year Experience/Freshman Interest Groups/Faculty Fellows* – faculty and staff are assigned to specific residence halls where they participate in activities, presentations and discussions about campus-wide events and issues (Hyman, 1995; Phelps, 1993; Schroeder & Hurst, 1996).

**New Student Orientation* – faculty and student affairs staff can play a major role in orienting students to campus (King, 1993; McAuliffe, et al, 1989).

**Outcomes Assessment* – faculty and student affairs staff each use their expertise to design and implement an assessment plan to measure satisfaction, attitudes, and other items (Banta & Kuh, 1998).

**Service Learning* – by adding a service learning component to classes, faculty and student affairs staff can assist students in learning (Knefelkamp, 1991).

**Annual Week/Month Events* – typically, student affairs staff work with students in planning diversity, women's, health and other annual programs. Faculty can add a new perspective if they are included on these planning teams (McAuliffe et al, 1989).

OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATION

Comprehensive research has not yet been conducted to ascertain the outcomes of the focus on student learning and the increased collaboration taking place on campuses all over the country. However, there are many desired outcomes, some of which include improved cognitive, interpersonal and organization skills; self-discipline, self-understanding, and responsibility for self and community; increased leadership and citizenship; academic success; and retention (Bloland et al, 1996).

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This project has been funded in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under the contract number RR-93-002008. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.